



General Assembly

Distr.: General
14 October 2010
English
Original: French

Sixty-fifth session

Agenda item 115

Follow-up to the outcome of the Millennium Summit

Letter dated 27 September 2010 from the Permanent Observer of the African Union to the United Nations addressed to the President of the General Assembly

I have the honour to transmit herewith the statement of the Chairperson of the African Union Commission, Jean Ping, at the General Assembly high-level plenary meeting on the Millennium Development Goals (see annex).

I should be grateful if the text of the statement could be circulated as a document of the General Assembly.

(Signed) Fete Antonio
Permanent Observer



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Statement by His Excellency Mr. Jean Ping, Chairperson of the African Union Commission at the General Assembly High-level Plenary Meeting on the Millennium Development Goals

It is a tremendous honour and a great privilege for me to take the floor this afternoon in this august assembly. I should like to start by thanking the United Nations for having organized this high-level plenary meeting in order to review the progress made and the challenges that lie ahead as we implement the Millennium Development Goals which were adopted in 2000, at the Millennium Summit, as part of the commitment to "spare no effort to free our fellow men, women and children from the abject and dehumanizing conditions of extreme poverty".

As my contribution to this high-level meeting I should like to talk to you about the progress the African continent has made towards achieving the Millennium Development Goals — what we have done, the local solutions we have found, the engines for growth and the challenges that lie ahead as we move towards development in the continent.

This meeting is of the utmost importance, for it is taking place as we near the tenth anniversary of the adoption of the Millennium Development Goals, five years before the 2015 deadline, at a time when there is great uncertainty regarding the viability of the global economy. This high-level meeting also gives us an opportunity to draw attention to all that the African countries — with the assistance of the international community — will have to do if they are to achieve the Millennium Development Goals by 2015.

This meeting will focus, *inter alia*, on the outcome of the Follow-up International Conference on Financing for Development to Review the Implementation of the Monterrey Consensus (Doha Declaration on Financing for Development) and on the Conference on the World Financial and Economic Crisis and Its Impact on Development with a view to strengthening the global partnership for development, supporting strategies designed to avert an economic downturn and accelerating progress towards achieving the Millennium Development Goals and the other internationally agreed goals.

We have made progress towards the Millennium Development Goals: as a whole, the continent is well on the way to achieving some of them — for example, those concerning primary education, gender equality and empowerment of women, access to drinking water and combating HIV/AIDS. The antiretroviral treatment is becoming increasingly available in many countries and, in some places, maternal mortality rates are being reduced. However, at the present rate, Africa will not be able to achieve most of the Goals, particularly those relating to health. In Africa, 1 woman in 16 dies in childbirth; every minute, eight children — two of them newborn babies — die although these deaths could have been prevented.

In order to reverse this trend the African Union has initiated, in more than 13 countries, a campaign to reduce maternal mortality in Africa, its motto being "Africa is not indifferent. No woman should die while giving birth". By the end of the year this campaign will be extended to seven other countries. In 2006 – the last year for which data are available – a total of 880,000 people died of malaria worldwide; 91 per cent of these deaths occurred in Africa, and 85 per cent of those who died were children under the age of 5.

The global economic and financial crisis has further lessened the likelihood of Africa's achieving the Millennium Development Goals. However, we remain confident that, given sound policies and sufficient financing, Africa will be able to achieve them. We must implement appropriate policies and mobilize support to enable Africa to rise up out of poverty; for the primary responsibility for ensuring that the Millennium Development Goals are achieved rests on Africa; of course, the international partners also have a major responsibility, for they must honour their commitments and support the strategies outlined by individual countries.

Economic growth in Africa seems to be picking up following the global economic and financial crisis; this year, growth is 4.7 per cent and, in 2011, it is expected to reach 5.6 per cent. Although this is lower than it was before the crisis and is not enough to halve poverty by 2015, it is the basis for achieving the Millennium Development Goals.

A number of African countries are introducing innovative policies that, if followed by the other countries in the continent, should produce positive results and lead to achievement of the Millennium Development Goals in Africa. Choices will have to be made; these choices must be wise and timely.

That is why, at the Conference of Heads of State and Government of the African Union, held in Kampala in July 2010, the Heads of State adopted a common African position on the Millennium Development Goals and reaffirmed their resolve to act together to achieve the Goals so as to eliminate hunger and poverty and put the African countries, individually and collectively, on the road towards sustainable growth and development.

The African countries are determined to make a concerted effort to create an environment conducive to mobilizing national resources and attracting foreign direct investments; an environment that will foster development of the private sector and make up for the shortfall in investments in basic sectors such as water, land administration, health – including HIV/AIDS – and other infrastructure services.

Africa has the resources it needs to achieve the Millennium Development Goals by the deadline of 2015. We must speed up implementation of our various continental development frameworks and promptly honour the commitments made by African Heads of State and Government in certain areas – agriculture, education, health, statistics, employment, peace and security – which are the means of encouraging progress and attaining the Millennium Development Goals.

This can be done, provided that our major partners honour their commitments and provided that steps are taken to combat capital flight out of Africa and thus move more swiftly towards achievement of the Millennium Development Goals by 2015. In 2005, the Group of Eight and other development partners promised to allocate 0.7 per cent of their GNP to predictable aid; and, at Copenhagen, 30 billion

United States dollars were pledged developing countries to help them adapt to and attenuate the effects of climate change.

I should like to end by expressing my sincere thanks to all the Heads of State and Government here present for their continuing concern for the future and well-being of Africa. The African Union urges you to remain steadfast in this vital effort to develop our continent.

Allow me also to thank our partners for their unwavering support. I should like to take this opportunity to urge you, once again, to join us in the unrelenting fight against poverty so as to ensure a better life for all African people.